

Apr 23, 2025

To potential students who hope I will serve as their graduate advisor,

Thank you for the inherent compliment of considering me as your potential graduate advisor. In this letter, I provide some information that I hope will help you assess the alignment between your career goals and what my research/action team can offer as learning experiences.

The first thing that would be helpful for you to know is that the program of study in ecological community psychology at Michigan State University is focused on supporting your development as a scholar, albeit a community-engaged scholar. This means that the more your vision of your future aligns with someone who conducts community-engaged research for a living, the more likely that the opportunities the program offers will be aligned with these goals. In contrast, the more that your vision of your future is of someone who primarily conducts community action (e.g., organizing, advocacy, non-profit or public sector leadership), the less the opportunities we offer will align with your goals. Our graduates do go on to a variety of careers, but the reality is that our program of study is focused on your development as a community-engaged researcher.

Second, you should know that--although I do continue to involve myself in other areas of research on a limited basis--in my research/action team we have two areas of active work that we can offer you opportunities in.

First Area: Applied Youth Sociopolitical Development. We continue to study the development of young persons as members of pluralistic communities. This interest includes developmental assets like community involvement, inclusiveness and critical consciousness. A great deal of this work happens within a long-standing partnership involving Community Tampa Bay Inc's Anytown program, which supports high school students' development of the skills for involvement in community efforts to advance justice (you can find a description in Acevedo-Polakovich et al., 2016).

As of Spring 2025, current projects within this area include:

1. An examination of the role of critical consciousness on teenager's resilience (Acevedo Polakovich et al., under review),
2. An examination of the experiences and insights of teenagers participating in Anytown (Jenkins et al, under review),
3. An exploration of the various mechanisms that might drive Anytown's impact on inclusivity (Acevedo-Polakovich et al, under review).
4. Attempts to examine whether core constructs targeted by Anytown are manifested equally across participants' intersectionalities involving gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic opportunity. These constructs include:
 - ... inclusivity (co-lead by doctoral candidate, Taylor Martin),

... civic engagement attitudes (co-lead by graduate student, Lexi LaChappa), and
... agentive steadfastness (co-lead by graduate student, Melody Zakarian)

5. We have started discussion of a project to develop a short scale to assess critical hope, the capacity to envision possibilities for just and equitable futures while accounting for present challenges to those futures. This project will likely begin in 2026 and last a few years.

Published papers that give you examples of our prior team's work in this area:

Acevedo-Polakovich, I.D., Cousineau, J. R., Quirk, K.M., Gerhart, J.I., Bell, K.M. & Adomako, M.S. (2014). Toward an Asset Orientation in the Study of US Latina/o Youth: Biculturalism, Ethnic Identity, and Positive Youth Development. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 42(2), 201-229. doi: 10.1177/0011000013477904

Acevedo-Polakovich, I.D., Beck, K.L., Hawks, E. & Ogdie, S.E. (2016). Toward a Relevant Psychology of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination: Linking Science and Practice to Develop Interventions that work in Community Settings. In A. Alvarez, C. Liang., & H. A. Neville (Eds), *The Cost of Racism for People of Color: Contextualizing Experiences of Discrimination* (pp.317-338). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.

Second Area: Anticolonial methods and constructs, community language revindication. As I write this letter, (April, 2024), I am in my first year of a new area of work, which—though emerging—is what I anticipate increasingly dedicating the next foreseeable portion of my career to. This work focuses broadly on anticoloniality, indigenous ways of knowing, whether/how these ideas should/do impact psychologies, and indigenous language revindication/revitalization. This is exciting and important work for me. Although I am interested in these questions across geographies, most of my work is focused on the Americas. Specific projects that are underway (both in early stages):

1. A content analysis and critique of the way in which colonialism has been accounted for in US community psychology (as reflected in AJCP).
2. A paper laying out a rationale and agenda for community language reivindicacion/revitalization as an area of work for community psychologists.

As this is an emerging area of formal inquiry for me, I do not have published papers for you to review, but I can point you to papers by other scholars that influence the aforementioned projects.

Ballestrin, L. (2022). Postcolonial and decolonial subaltern feminisms. *Postcolonial Studies*, 25(1), 108-127.

Ciofalo, N. & Ortiz-Torres, B. (2024). Toward decolonial community psychologies from Abya Yala. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 74, 62-73.

Pérez Báez, G., Vogel, R., & Patolo, U. (2019). Global Survey of Revitalization Efforts: A mixed methods approach to understanding language revitalization practices.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society*, 1(1).

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope that it was helpful to you in some way. Please feel welcome and invited to schedule a meeting with me if I can answer any further questions.

Ignacio